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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0148

INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

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RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 003454

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/28/2018

TAGS: MOPS MARR MASS PREL PTER SY IZ

SUBJECT: GOI DISCUSSES COMPENSATION FOR DISPLACED
CHRISTIANS AND OTHER ISSUES AT NSC MEETING OF OCTOBER 26

REF: A. BAGHDAD 3325

B. BAGHDAD 3383

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S) Summary. Prime Minister al-Maliki opened the October 26 meeting of the Iraqi National Security Council (NSC) with an appeal for Iraqi and Coalition Forces to do everything to avoid use of excessive force while continuing to conduct operations against insurgents. The NSC went on to discuss both old and new issues, including the provisional services update for Diyala and Ninewa; road closures and concrete barrier removal (in Baghdad); assassinations and intelligence activities in response; and Central Bank of Iraq security. Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Essawi noted actions to pay compensation to displaced Christians in Mosul as a means to encourage them to return to their homes. Turning to new business, the NSC discussed threats from fraudulent companies, and the security situation and detainee conditions in Basrah. During the latter, the PM made another lengthy plea for security forces to respect human rights. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Before addressing the agenda the Prime Minister made an appeal for better management of force in security operations mounted by coalition and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) soldiers in Sadr City. He said that he had received a number of complaints about alleged excessive use of force and that while most stemmed from confrontations at checkpoints in which residents felt that the soldiers displayed a lack of respect, one case involved the purported death of a child mistakenly shot by a sniper team. Maliki stated that whether intentional or not, poorly executed military activities could alienate the populace and drive them back into the hands of insurgents.

Follow-up Issues

Provisional Services Update for Diyala and Ninewa

¶3. (SBU) DPM Essawi presented a report on his efforts to provide services in Diyala and Ninewa provinces, noting that he had held a series of coordinating meetings. He pointed to continuing agricultural problems and said unemployment remains high. He said that the atmosphere in Nineva province is better than it had been but that the continued presence of the security forces is key. Among the problems he noted are the slow pace at which agricultural budgets are being liquidated, the need for additional wells, the high cost of wheat seed, and the lack of security for wheat storage facilities. On the latter point the Minister of Defense Abdul Qadir said very few soldiers are required to protect the facilities and he would ensure troops are made available. The DPM said that the government possesses large wheat seed stock in Baghdad that needs to be delivered to farmers quickly. The PM raised concerns that the seed being distributed to farmers under GOI programs might be too much and too late, and that the Council of Ministers (COM) is

worried that farmers might attempt to resell the subsidized seed at market rates rather than plant it.

Compensation for Christians in Mosul

¶4. (U) DPM Essawi reported to the NSC that the Ministry of Immigration is implementing the Government's decision to provide compensation to displaced Christian families who fled Mosul. He also said that the Ministry would pay for the homes of three Christian families that were destroyed. According to the DPM, everything would be done to encourage Christians from Mosul to return to their former residences.

Traffic and Security Barriers in Baghdad

¶5. (SBU) Following up on the PM's request in a previous NSC meeting for action to address traffic and image problems caused by security barriers and checkpoints in the capital, Baghdad Operations Commander (BOC) General Aboud Qanbar told the PM that concrete barriers obstructing traffic throughout the capital would be removed wherever improved security conditions permit. Speaking as aerial views of specific barriers in the city were projected on a screen, he provided a detailed listing of congested locations in Baghdad where barriers would soon be removed. He noted that some of the changes require coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs because the security barriers were in place to protect embassies. In response to the PM's specific request as to what is being done to address congestion into and out of Sadr City, which is forcing a two hour commute for some residents, Aboud said all twelve roads leading into Sadr City are being studied to ease congestion. According to the

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General, the work is proceeding in coordination with other ministries and MNF-I. He cautioned, however, that barrier removal would not solve traffic congestion on roads in the capital built to accommodate 600,000 vehicles that now handle 1.3 million. He pointed to a growth in commercial traffic (particularly with the governorates), increased school attendance, and the burgeoning employment in government jobs all coupled with the absence of any new road construction as the primary reasons for the rapid increase in vehicle traffic throughout Baghdad.

¶6. (SBU) The PM thanked General Aboud for the work and noted that easing traffic should only be done in a manner that does not impact security. However, he emphasized, security needs to be rational in the eyes of the citizens. Barriers must reassure citizens rather than simply be a cause for congestion. Essawi told the General that citizens need to see improvement, and that he would have to open more traffic lanes. Minister of the Interior al-Bulani said that General Aboud's approach to this issue is realistic. National Security Advisor Rubaie asked the BOC how long it would take before some improvement could be seen, as currently it could take up to two and one half hours to get into the city center from non-core areas. Aboud responded that results would be seen in one month. He said, however, that road repairs and improvements would also be required, a theme echoed by Bulani. The PM then reiterated the call to get Baghdad's traffic arteries open and flowing.

Assassination and Intelligence Activities in Response

¶7. (S) Continuing previous discussion in the NSC on countering assassination attempts, the PM asked where General Aboud stands on utilizing undercover agents to counter the threat. Aboud said that he would need to deploy undercover officers to industrial and commercial areas in order to detect activities related to making and storing VBIEDs. The PM noted that better security is needed on high threat routes, especially the highway locally known as the "assassination road." Aboud responded that undercover officers patrol this particularly dangerous route, as ISF checkpoints alone do not suffice. Bulani then asked the PM

for his concurrence on the deployment of undercover agents along the road, to which the PM responded that Aboud would work the issue, as the patrols were needed. Aboud said the issue would be addressed in the Crisis Action Committee (CAC) meeting scheduled for the next day.

Central Bank of Iraq Security

¶8. (C) The Deputy Director of the Central Bank of Iraq raised the issue of security for the National Bank. According to the Deputy Director, the Facilities Protection Service (FPS) guards assigned to protect the Bank are not effective. He said they had failed to notice anything suspicious when the Bank suffered a serious fire that compromised its security. He stated that 350 armed guards with prior military experience are needed to replace the largely unqualified and unreliable FPS force that currently protects the Central Bank and its outlying offices. Minister Bulani echoed these comments, noting that the problem is not restricted to the Bank's security force alone. He claimed that as many as 40,000 GOI security officers nationwide are unfit for duty, and the FPS force had suffered from no-show guards who should have been fired. Maliki interjected that that the Bank and its offices had at one time been protected by a force that numbered as many as 2000, but now had dwindled to 138. Rubaie then asked Bulani if the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) has a unit ready to assume security responsibilities at the Bank, to which Bulani responded that he could assemble the force in 3-4 weeks. The Central Bank Deputy discussed details with MOI and then mentioned that the Bank also needs to move to a new location to improve its security. He said land had been acquired and construction was planned but that this would take time. The PM said the National Bank might need to relocate to a temporary facility until a replacement could be built.

New Issues

Threat from Fraudulent Front Companies

¶9. (SBU) Minister of State for National Security Affairs al-Waeli gave a presentation on the topic of threats from fraudulent front companies. He said that Iraqis are being victimized by unscrupulous firms defrauding people, particularly through pyramid scams. PM Maliki asked if anything could be done other than to educate Iraqis about the problem. Minister of Justice al-Safi responded that because many of these companies operate internationally and legally,

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prosecution is often not possible, and Waeli echoed Safi's remarks. The PM then said this is more of a matter for civil suits, rather than criminal prosecution and that he thought the solution lay in the civil courts. Safi said that if a fraud is committed, it could be prosecuted, and Maliki directed that a warning be issued to the public about these scams.

Security Situation and Detainee Conditions in Basrah

¶10. (C) Safi said that while the overall security picture in Basrah is good, concerns remain over infiltration from neighboring countries, sleeper cells, criminal activity, and the backlash from excessive use of force during military operations. While acknowledging progress, including the successful seizure of many weapons and other successful security force operations, he said the Provincial Council had complained about some actions of British troops and CTB officers which led to civilian deaths. PM Maliki said that if there are allegations of illegal killings in Basrah, they should be investigated. He said that security operations in the city had achieved good results, and that Basrah is opening up for investment. While conceding that some complaints are false, intended only to cause problems for the security forces, the PM stated that security forces are accountable and must respect human rights, preserve citizen's

dignity, avoid excessive use of force, prevent unnecessary property destruction, and detain only those who could be reasonably viewed as suspects. He said that the ISF are here to serve the people, and the GOI must follow up on complaints.

¶11. (C) Minister Waeli said that gangs and outlaws are returning to Basrah, corrupting the police, and threatening commercial development. Minister Abdul Qadir responded that security efforts in Basrah had been highly successful, interagency cooperation is good, and that operations there could serve as a model for other cities. Minister Safi added that part of the problem in Basrah is that individuals were being detained because of personal vendettas. He said that judges issue arrest warrants based on statements provided by security officials, but when these statements prove to be false, the judges are put in a difficult position. Abdul Qadir agreed that the judges are acting ethically on the evidence provided to them. Bulani added that criminal activity is a problem, but not a direct threat to the GOI.

¶12. (SBU) The PM concluded the meeting by deciding to save the discussion of the agenda item on implementation of international standards in Iraqi airports until the Ministry of Transportation, who was not present, could present a report on the subject.

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